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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE COURTESY OF CONSCIENCE.

"But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it and for conscience' sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"—1 Cor. x., 28, 29.

I do not believe that there is another book in creation which ever inculcates the duty of courtesy of conscience, or politeness of conscience. We have learned, in social life, in regard to ordinary affairs, not that we are to stand for ourselves, but that we are to have respect for the feelings of others. The child is taught to give up the best chair, although he has got it, and although, for that matter, he has a right to it, and it is his. We train children thus to yield their rights for the sake of others. Speech is free in this country; but we train men to courtesy, and to silence as a part of courtesy. We have certain rights of property, and in great matters we stand upon them; but in a thousand things we teach men to waive their rights in this respect for the sake of some contribution to the general stock of happiness, because that is the way to get along in life. There is, however, one thing which men have always been taught to stand for perpendicularly, without slips or gradations; and that is conscience. Conscience, we are told, is a thing which must not be bartered, nor sold, nor compromised, nor in any way treated except in a most up and down manner. Conscience! Oh, conscience!—that must be maintained at all hazards.

Paul, therefore, is the boldest man in literature, because he says that you must respect another man's conscience. No matter if you think he is wrong, you must do so.

Sunday Morning, March 21, 1875. Lesson: Rom. xiv. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 217, 725, 1258.

"But," you say, "my conscience tells me that it is the other way." That has nothing to do with it: his conscience tells him that way; and, no matter what your conscience tells you, you are to respect what his tells him. Be courteous in this, as in other things.

What is your conscience? Do you carry a little God in you that you call "Conscience"? Have you a little infallibility in which you sit, and look around, and determine for everybody what is right and what is wrong, according to your judgment? Do you undertake to make your conscience the standard for other men's consciences?

In dealing with men you are to recognize, not that they are right, necessarily, because they go with their consciences—you may not be right when you go with *your* conscience—but that you are not to be judged by each others' consciences. You have got to stand by yourself, and other men have got to stand by themselves, before God. According to the passage which I read in your hearing this morning, you are going to give an account to God, not for your neighbor's sins, but for your own sins. Paul says:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more."

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth."

And yet, if there is any popular feeling which only hits the truth here and there; if there is any public sentiment which is uncertain, nebulous, and full of errors and mischiefs, it is the notion that prevails in respect to conscience. The metaphorical phrases which have been employed in respect to conscience, as well as the philosophy which has been applied to it, have misled men. It has been called "God's vicegerent." It has been called "the voice of God in the heart of man." Various other such definitions of it have been given. It has been taught that conscience discerns good and evil. It has been claimed that conscience interprets right and wrong. It has been urged that men have in conscience a light which shines out and determines the moral quality of things.

Now, if these were phrases used in respect to moral sense,

and if the term *moral sense* were interpreted as a complex state, there would not be so much to criticise, but as applied to conscience they are totally and mischievously wrong; for conscience is nothing but a sentiment. It has no eyes, it has no intellection, and it has no power of judging whether a thing be right or wrong. If it had, how would you account for the universal diversities which exist? If conscience determined right and wrong, how could men be split up on the same points, the world over, into thousands and thousands of differences of opinion? But it does not. Conscience is simply a sentiment in the soul of man, which, when the understanding says that a thing is right or is wrong, responds. When a clock, by its own machinery, causes the hand to move around and point to twelve, the bell goes off; but the bell did not move the clock, it was the clock that moved the bell: and so when, looking out upon the affairs of life, the understanding judges a thing to be right or wrong, then conscience goes off, and rings its bell, whether it be knell or pleasure.

This fundamental idea, that conscience is simply a moral sentiment in the constitution of the mind, that it depends for its action on auxiliaries, and that these auxiliaries are as numerous, almost, as the faculties of the mind, will go far to clear up our apprehension; it will go far, I think, to help us in the matter of determining what is duty; and it will go far, also, toward promoting that charity which ought to unite men together in the kindliest relationships.

The first action of conscience is always one of recipiency. It never acts until it is acted upon. It is acted upon by two general classes of influence—first, the intellectual, and second, the emotive. The interpretation of these will go far toward the practical application which I wish to make of this subject.

Consider—for we will not reason outside of your own personal knowledge and experience—consider how innumerable are the phases of right and wrong. Consider how very different right and wrong are in different circumstances. Consider what nice distinctions there are in this respect. Consider, when a child is born into the family, how little he knows about

life; and how, during all the earlier part of his life, he is a learner of what in domestic relations is right and wrong. Consider how continually the mother is school-mistress to him, saying, "No, my child, that is wrong, and this is right,"—the child all the time saying, "Why is that wrong? and how is this right?" Consider how the child gradually begins to feel an impulsion toward active duties which he did not want to perform. Consider how he inclines to them because he feels that it is right to obey, although he naturally feels disinclined to them. The child is made, by drill, by discipline, by teaching, to understand what is right and what is wrong. The sense of right and wrong is inoculated in him. All the way through his young life in the family, the child is occupied in learning.

Now, if conscience were an inspiration, what need would there be of this gradual development by which the child is picking up one thing, and another thing, and another thing, and slowly learning to associate with different things the feeling of right and wrong? At first there is no such power in the child. It is an artificial, in some sense it is an educated, faculty.

When the child grows up, and goes outside of the family, and enters other spheres, how he has to learn in those spheres what is right and wrong! How he has to make himself acquainted with what is right and wrong in the neighborhood. It is right for me to keep the road in repair in front of my house; but my conscience never tells me anything about it. I have no conscience which says "road" to me; but, if I am in a farming neighborhood, I very soon find that I must do my share in promoting the public welfare by keeping up the road. There is no conscience in me that says, "Keep Canada thistles off from your farm;" but if there is a law that a man must do it or pay a certain damage, I speedily come to have the idea that it is wrong to let Canada thistles grow on my farm. There is nothing in the nature of a man who is born where Canada thistles grow that tells him that he ought to destroy them; but if the law requires him to do it, then he learns it. I learn that I must keep up my fences, and that it is wrong for me to let them go down so that my cattle can

get into my neighbor's lot and eat up his corn and cabbages. Not only do I learn this lesson, but society has learned it. It is one of those things that was found out, not in the rocks; not in the sky; not from Moses; not through any channel of nature or decrees. Men found how it was easy to live and how it was not; how to live so that they should become more manly, and how not. They found out that one way was the right way, and that the other was the wrong way. It took ages for them to find it out. And when the child is born, he learns it from his parents and from his neighbors.

It is an intellectual process all the way through, to determine what is right and what is wrong. When it is found out, then conscience rings the bell, and never till then. It is an after-feeling, joined to a judgment or perception of the facts and relations of human life.

Thus we learn what is right and wrong about fences, cattle, and taxes, and all manner of things which relate to the welfare of a neighborhood.

Likewise, when we go into a trade, we find it has its own relations and regulations. There are the affiances which it makes with neighboring trade and guilds. It reaches up and down, and it reaches out on every side; but no man has an interpretation of these things in himself. He gains a knowledge of them by experience, by inquiry, by seeing what other men do. It is an artificial process of learning.

You learn that it is right to pay your notes which are due before three o'clock in the afternoon. Where is the law of nature which says you must do that? It is not a law of nature, it is a law of the banks; but, being a law for the facility of commerce, it becomes a moral law, because the violation of it entails immorality of certain kinds; and as soon as you have found out that one way facilitates and prospers men, and that the opposite way hinders and hurts them, you have God's thought about right and wrong on that point as clearly as though you had seen Jehovah on Mount Sinai thundering it down, or graving it on stone.

The revelation of right and wrong is not by this mode or by that, but by every method through which the understand-

ing of man sees the best ways of adjusting men to each other for common peace, common prosperity, common happiness, and common elevation. These ways are first recognized by an intellectual process; and that process is followed by a second, which is the recognition by conscience of what is right and what is wrong.

In religious things, and under religious institutions, the same things take place; and I shall have occasion to speak of them further on.

All these elements of right and wrong are ascertained, then, through long ages of experience and history and legislation. Some of God's revelations, to this day, have been given to us by visions and direct personal inspiration; but the great majority of the revelations of God to this world have come through the way that men have lived. They found them out through living. Joy is revelatory, and sorrow is revelatory. Hindrances, burdens, all manner of sufferings, affiliations of various kinds,—these all tend to reveal the hidden laws, and the complexities of laws, that are involved in creation.

We do not learn right and wrong, then, by intuition, in the first instance. We found rules and laws existing when we waked up into life. These rules and laws have been gradually accumulated and marked out by the experience of mankind. They determine for the conscience what is right and what is wrong; and then the conscience ratifies them by distinctive action.

Now, in all ordinary matters, conscience only responds to an intellectual perception or conclusion. Therefore you can perceive that conscience will be contracted and partial just in proportion as the intellect is. You find a man of a narrow judgment, and he has a narrow conscience. You find a man of a dull, stupid, fumbling understanding, and he has just such a conscience—that is, his conscience never goes beyond his reason in the interpretation of what is right and wrong. A man may have a strong feeling of conscience; but it may not be intelligent; and if it is not intelligent, it does not express itself according to knowledge. Under such circumstances it is repressed where it ought to be developed, and it

is developed and in exercise where it ought to be repressed. The ordering of it, the action of it, depends upon the clarity of the understanding.

That is one reason why you find men so divided among themselves on very small matters. Here are two men, near neighbors, seeing each other almost every day, but hardly ever speaking to each other. Good men they are, both of them, living next door to one another; and they will scarcely allow their children to play through the fence! Now, what is the difference between them? One believes that God forcordained from all eternity that every thing should come to pass from his own free will, and for his own everlasting glory; the other does not believe it: and they will not talk to each other. Why is it? Because on those points, their understandings being narrow, and often bigoted, they have said to themselves, "That is vital, and therefore I am bound to stand by it: come on, Conscience;" and so the bull-dog rushes out and sits down on that doctrine, and everybody is judged by it. If you are right there, you are right pretty much everywhere; and if you are wrong there, you are wrong pretty much everywhere. Narrowness, bigotry of judgment —how it separates men! How it acts on their consciences, by obliging them to follow a miserable guide!

I say to my flock, "Follow me." If I am clear-headed, and have good eyesight, and am reasonably intelligent as a guide, it is quite safe for them to follow me: but suppose I am near-sighted, and timid; suppose I pick out a path that is muddy, hard, difficult, covered with stumps and roots and stones, and abounding in all manner of acclivities—then, if my congregation are obliged to follow me, what sort of a time will the men, women, and children have! and what a ragged set they will be!

Now, see how men's honest hearts are often be-drabbled and draggled through troublesome ways by following an incompetent judgment. One man has not much sense, although he has a good deal of conscience. The conscience that he has can be of little use to him, because it can act only according to the sense that he has. That sense being poor and partial and inexperienced, his conscience has an

awful time following after it. An intelligent conscience, therefore, is a very great luxury. It can hardly be said to have been a necessity, or how could the world, with so little of it, have got along as well as it has to this day?

Conscience may be dead in some spheres, and very acute in other spheres. If a man has a small reason, or a reason that is partial, or a reason that is acute in a few things and uninterpretative in other things, his conscience will partake of the quality of that reason, and will go awry to the extent that his reason is imperfect.

A man's understanding is very much like a window. The sun-light is all of one color; but all the light that goes through the window is not. Sometimes the audience have a scarf of yellow running over them, sometimes one of blue, and sometimes one of red,—according as the window is painted. Man's reason being like a painted window, the light that goes through it and falls upon his conscience is bizarre, grotesque, wrinkled, bent or distorted. I have known men whose understanding had in it hideous saints, crowned monsters, apocalyptic visions, and what not—things that took the colors which were painted on the window of their reason.

It is very important, therefore, that men should be instructed. It was the want of a clear discrimination, of a trained moral sense, of an interpreting conscience, that led such men as Buckle, on this question, to go to the opposite side from that which was taken by the theologians. The Churches were echoing and re-echoing the idea that men should go by moral sense, by conscience; and he bounded to the other extreme, and said that the world had derived no benefit from moral sense, that everything lay in the reason, and that it was the increase of intelligence that the world should be grateful for.

Now, both things are true. The moral sense, in order to act to its best advantage, should have clarity and comprehensiveness, and should be trained to accuracy of judgment, so that we may know what is right and what is wrong, and so that our knowledge may have a motive power which comes from the response of conscience.

The consciences of men are just as various in their de-

grees of susceptibility as their other faculties are. The tactile sense is not the same in all men. Neither is the susceptibility to education in the tactile sense. I never could take a piece of woolen cloth in the dark and tell its color; but cloth-buyers can, by the *feel*. They are enabled to do it by an educated delicacy of touch. I never could, through a microscope, determine things that Draper, or Wier, or any other microscopist can. I have not had the education to give me the susceptibility that they have. Every one of our faculties is in quality and quantity different from those of other men. Different men have different gifts. Some men, we know, are natural singers—poets. Some men cannot make poetry, but they can make verses. Some men cannot even make verses, but they can appreciate them when other folks make them. (I belong to that class.) Some men do not even appreciate them, unless they are very striking. The imaginative sense in them is so feeble that it requires an immense blow to make it come up at all. Some men have such a sense of color that the lowest tones gratify them; but coarse natures, with small sense of color, have so little susceptibility that the lower tones do not affect them, and it is not until they come to staring yellow, and red-hot red, that they feel at all. There is a want of resiliency in the faculty, as it exists in them.

We know how men differ in the arithmetical faculty. We know how easy it is for some to become mathematical, and how difficult it is for others. We know how easy it is for some to acquire a language, and how almost impossible it is for others. Some men are by nature speakers. It is no more trouble for them to speak than for a fountain to flow. Other men are full of thought, but slow of speech. They are like pumps without a nozzle. There is water enough, but there is no way of getting it out. "The well is deep; but what shall I draw with?" is their perpetual motto. Some men have skill, and some have not. Some men have dexterity, and some have not. Some men can go to sea and not be sick, and some cannot. Every degree of gift and aptitude runs through the human mind.

Now, it seems but a little thing to say that the conscience

stands on the same foundation; but it is a very important thing to say and to know that the sense of right and wrong in individuals varies on a scale as high and long as that of the reason, the imagination, or the constructive forces of life. I instance this, in order to lead to the consideration of the ordinary auxiliaries of a feeble conscience.

If you take a man who has a naturally strong moral sense with a good judgment, he easily learns and quickly responds to what is right and what is wrong; but if you take a man who has good judgment, and whose conscience or moral sentiment is comparatively feeble, how are you going, except by the direct training of the moral sentiment in him, to make his conscience act? It is at this point that I wish to show you there are auxiliary faculties, under whose influence, thrown upon the conscience, the conscience itself becomes active. It will be found that men are sensitive to right and wrong, not so much by reason of the direct impact of intellectual decision, as by reason of intellectual decision transmitted through another faculty or emotion.

Let me take a very familiar instance. I go before a large assembly, wishing to argue in their presence the question of anti-slavery (I can now safely employ such an illustration as this). I am an abolitionist, and I wish to discuss this subject. I know my people are so prejudiced that they would burn me if I said a word about abolitionism. Such is their feeling; and they sit, not only doggedly, but like dogs ready to bark. I say to myself, "How shall I get at that question of justice? In the present mood of this congregation, I know that I shall have every one of them against me if I argue it; and what is the use of arguing it, unless I can change them?" What do I do? I begin afar off, and take some ground that is common to them and to me. On this, I approach to the out-skirts of the main battle-ground; and upon that I throw the light of wit and humor. One of the best missionary influences vouchsafed to the human soul is wit and humor. I throw out wit and humor, and bring my hearers into a state of royal good nature; and through these elements I bring in the truth which men do not like; and they say, "Well, I don't believe it; but after

all, let it go—he is smart." Directly or indirectly, I begin to make a lodgment in the moral sense of these men. Although their conscience cannot be directly approached, I can get at it through the side of wit and humor; and while I keep on that side of them, so that I am good natured myself, I can pour in the truth on their minds, and can at last make a sure lodgment in their moral sense—a thing which I could not have done by argument alone. In this case, wit and humor are auxiliaries; conscience is intoned by them; and decisions are borne in upon the moral sense through the element of wit and humor—one of the most civilising of all the influences in the soul of man.

Let us take another instance. A man is not very susceptible to right or wrong; he is a hard, dry, worldly man; but really he is a good fellow, and very kind. You are meeting just such men all the time. He is not religious at all; he does not go to church once a year; and he is not very careful of his language: but those who know him say, "Well, he has a heart as big as an ox's." They say, "You just talk to that man about any trouble or distress, and you'll see what he is: he is as tender as a woman." You go to him and you undertake abstractly to demonstrate that a certain truth is true, or that a given course is right, and that the opposite course is wrong, and he will not listen to you a single moment: but you demonstrate to his sense of kindness that your position is right and that his is wrong, and you begin to touch the feeling of sympathy in him. He says, "Well, well, I never saw it in that light before. If that is so, it is so." You can reach him through his benevolence, but he will not hear reason.

Take an illustration out of my own experience—for it is always allowable, I believe, for a man to dissect his own sins. When I came to Brooklyn, feeling a certain independence, I refused to return marriage certificates to the authorities. There was no law which compelled me to do it, and I was not going to return them for mere form's sake. By-and-by a law was passed that all clergymen should return marriage certificates to the Board of Health, but I did not do it then; I did not see any reason for it, and I was not going to trouble

myself about it. But after the first year of the war, on two or three occasions it happened, some woman would come to me, and say, "My husband was killed on the battle-field; the government owed him for bounty and back-pay; but I cannot get the money unless I can prove that I was married to him: will you not give me a certificate?" I had none. I had made no return of their marriage. It did not take more than one argument like that to convince me that I ought to make returns of certificates of marriage. I said to myself, "If the bread of the poor is often to be determined by the fact of a marriage; if the fact of a marriage is a question of humanity, and can settle what is right and what is wrong,—then my duty in the matter is clear:" and I believe I have not failed to return the certificate of a marriage since that day. The mere abstract law would not affect my conscience; but since my conscience was approached through sympathy, through benevolent feeling, you could not bribe me to neglect my duty in that regard. My conscience has strength on that side.

There are some persons whose consciences are affected through the sense of the beautiful and the ideal, and almost only so. Many people think nothing to be right in worship or in belief that has not the grace of beauty with it. On the other hand, they think that nothing can be wrong which has that grace with it. "Nothing can be wrong if it is beautiful, and nothing can be right if it is homely," is about their creed.

Therefore you will find such persons making this curious distinction: an act which, in refined society, is performed with all manner of graces and embellishments, they tolerate and justify, while the same act performed in a vulgar crowd they condemn as grossly wrong. The conscience, in these cases, acts through the element of the beautiful; and to such a conscience that is wrong which is surrounded by homeliness, and that is right which is enshrined in beauty. The imaginative and æsthetical faculty is an auxiliary here. The selfishness of such persons always tends toward, and goes with, what is graceful and decorous, as if it were right. With them, the æsthetic and the ethic are at least twin brothers, if they are not identical. On the other hand, things of

the same character, done without the concomitants of beauty, are regarded as wrong. Pride is commendable here, in the midst of what is refined; but only surround it by what is vulgar, and it is detestable. Selfishness up here where it blooms, and covers itself with blossoms, is justified; but down there, ragged and roaring selfishness, though it be essentially the same in a moral point of view, is unjustified. The things which take place in a cathedral, where are groined arches, magnificent carving, sumptuous windows, the sweet-voiced choir, the surpliced priest, round, ruddy and smooth-faced—there, where things are done decorously and in order—ah! there is religion, there is worship; but go down into a squalid room where two or three hundred roaring Methodists have gathered together, and where they are shouting out their prayers as from catapults, murdering the King's English right and left, and singing cantering hymns, and how can there be religion or worship there? Persons, going where things are vulgar, and done as common folks do them, say, "If that is religion down there among that vulgar multitude, where is no grace and beauty—bah! if that is religion, deliver me from it." What is the reason they are contemptuous at the sincere, earnest, intense fervency of unwashed, uncombed worship? Because the asceticism is wanting. Their conscience has been trained to judge all things by that auxiliary of their conscience, the sense of the beautiful; and to them that which is beautiful is always right, while that which is not beautiful is never right.

You will see other men, whose consciences act entirely through the auxiliary of self-esteem. There is something very striking in this; but it does not follow, because a person has an overweening estimate of himself, that he is altogether out of balance. There are peculiar temperaments; there is a temperament of pride, of self-conceit, of self-esteem, or whatever you choose to call it; and to some persons, I have observed, every thing is right that they think to be right. The Ego in them is legislative and interpretive; and if they have done a certain thing, you can no more persuade them that it is wrong than you could change the laws of the globe. "Have I not done it?" they say to

themselves; and in their estimation that is reason enough for its being done. They are not conscious of the self-conceit that is in them; they do not themselves perceive it; but it is there. Whatever they have said must, they think, be true, no matter how much of a lie it may be; and whatever they do, they think is right. If they believe a thing, they can not conceive that it can be otherwise than so. The Ego in them is so strong that it determines every thing; and it is not only the auxiliary, but it is the despot, of their conscience. Thus persons often measure every thing about them by self-esteem. I have seen men who were so conceitedly conscientious that when they turned the screw, and took the last drop of blood out of the clerk, since it was they that turned the screw, they could not think that it was wrong. You could not, with the thunder of Sinai, drive it into them that they had erred. So conceited were they in their conscientiousness, that they were impregnable.

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

There is very little hope of a fool.

There are other consciences that act through veneration, and only through veneration. Right and wrong are by them determinable only through strict religious considerations; and these considerations are colored by the venerating element. Many persons think there is no religion except what is expressed through veneration; and when they hear a familiar colloquial religious discourse, they say, "Oh, it is shocking!" On the other hand, when they approach a church, their voices grow lower and lower as they come near the portal; and when they reach the step-stone they stop, and perform the virtue of lifting the hat; and they lay God under obligation by walking softly up the aisle; and they express their religious feeling by bowing; and they neither look to the right, to the left, nor any whither, but go right up to where the holy man of God stands. They do every thing in this restricted way. Do I ridicule them? No, I do not. Their conscience acts entirely through the faculty of veneration, of awe, of inspiration, and they are consistent with it. I criticise it; I describe it; I say that it

is narrow: nevertheless, it is sincere. It is only when they turn round and become judge of all the earth, and my judge in especial, and say, "Every thing that is done outside of this all-inspiring atmosphere is done wrong"—it is only then that I protest, and say, "Who art thou that judgest my conscience?" I worship, laughing; I worship, loving; I worship, reasoning; I worship as a full-orbed man; and there is nothing that God put into me of my higher nature as distinguished from the animal part of my being—there is no faculty of imagination or of reason in me; there is no emotion, whether it be high or low, of my being, which is worthy, that is not a part of the offering which I bring to God, and which is not as religious as any thing else, if I bring it in a religious spirit. If a man's conscience only works through veneration, respect it; but do not let any other man's conscience be a judge of yours. Allow no other man to be your critic in this regard.

These illustrations are sufficient. I will now only give you a few points of application. First, a consideration of the auxiliaries which work upon men's consciences, and of the differences that there are between those consciences, shows why your conscience must not judge the consciences of other men.

If my conscience works through the sense of beauty, why should I judge a man whose conscience works through the sense of the practical entirely? My conscience is not fitted to judge his under such circumstances. Let us suppose a case. Unquestionably a Raphael worships God largely through art. A man who is absolutely dead to every instinct of art—a stylite, an anchorite—thinks heaven to be obtained by pinched cheeks and a starved belly. He is always denying himself, denying himself, and denying himself; and that is his religion. Now, is he competent to judge the generous, red-cheeked Raphael? And yet, each has a conscience, and is true to that conscience.

Parents often judge their children by their own conscience. A stern, Sunday-keeping, rigorous-eyed, just man, who would not forfeit his word for the world, who pays every cent that he owes, and who collects every cent that is due

him; who walks with precision, and talks with precision, and does everything with precision; who is wound up by a prayer every day, and performs until he is wound up again—this man has a little buoyant sprite that comes through mother and grandmother, bringing joy and hilarity into his family; and what a time he has, trying to bring up that child! It is as if an elephant had inherited a canary-bird. Both are good in their several spheres, but one cannot give law to the other.

So it comes to pass that it is indispensable that men should bear in mind that, while moral sense is the same, it is susceptible of auxiliaries through which it acts, or by reason of which it acts; and that these auxiliaries are so different that one man's conscience cannot be the interpreter of other men's consciences. You are bound, therefore, to do as Paul commanded when he said, "Conscience, not thine own, but of the other."

Let me read that passage again, for perhaps some of you do not read your Bibles as often as you should:

"If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other."

Now then, there are different consciences—consciences that are just as different as folks are; and it is not enough for you to say, "I believe this to be right." That is no reason why you should judge another man's conscience. It is your duty to respect his conscience. It may be wrong, and it may need instruction and guidance; but you must take into consideration that your conscience is not a fair index or interpretation of his. If you condemn a man, it must be in the light of his own conscience. Before you condemn a man, you must see whether he is condemnable in the light of his own conscience as well as yours.

This courtesy, this consideration of other men's consciences, this recognition of the principle that your fellow men shall have liberty as well as yourself—how quick it takes down dictation and arbitrariness! How often do you see a man—one of the best and honestest of men; a man that is lovely (so lovely that you wish he was in heaven)—how often

do you see such a man stand before a congregation twenty years without an idea that there is a difference between his conscience and theirs! He hammers and hammers his conscience into theirs, and he hammers away many of his hearers, if it is in the city, because there they can choose where they will go. If it is in the country, they have two consciences—an outside conscience and an inside conscience—a conscience of their own and a make-believe conscience. The minister thinks he is right, and his conscience dictates; but it is no interpreter of theirs. It is local and limited, thank God! He undertakes to mould and pattern their consciences on that which is in himself, and not on that which is in Christ Jesus; whereas, while he holds his conscience he should allow them to hold theirs. The true principle is that of liberty; and in liberty there is variety; and in variety there is congruity. Indeed, it is only by variety that you can have harmony. If all notes in music were alike, you would have monotone. There must be the bass, the tenor, the alto, and the treble, with instruments of every shape and size and kind, to make those great effects which we call noble, glorious choral harmonies. And among men there is great variety in unity. A wise personality has regard to diversity. A generic right admits of specific differences. The teacher is glad to see variety in the gifts of his pupils.

When I take golden-pippin apple-seeds, and plant them, it is not because I want to get golden pippins, for I can get those by grafting from an old tree: it is because I hope they will "sport," as the saying is, and come to something better than the apples from which I took them.

When I sow flower-seeds in my garden, it is not because I want flowers of the same pattern which I have already, but because I hope they will develop improved kinds. The florist's heart bounds with delight when he gets a new variety; and it ought to be so in the garden of the Lord, in the husbandry of spiritual things. Let the genus be right, let there be the right species, and then let there be variety endlessly diversified.

It is indispensable that we should have a recognition of men's consciences as differing one from another—as small or

great; as torpid or sensitive; as intense or feeble; as colored by reason, by humor, by imagination, or by some other auxiliary. It is indispensable that we should recognize that a man may be right who differs from us. The tendency of this recognition is to make us charitable.

Oh! I wish that men would hate the Pope worse than they do. And who is the Pope? You are the Pope. What constitutes a Pope? A Pope is one who thinks that he has absolute authority over all things; and that is what you think: not in respect to other things; but the moment that you are brought to a place where you are to determine for your children, for your neighbors, for anybody, in matters of religion, your instinct is to make your sense of right and wrong, of the beautiful and the unbeautiful, their law. Every man is inclined to make his judgment the rule for all other men. Oh, that men had less of this intense egotism!

The Pope at Rome is one of the best men in the world, I suppose, because, under the circumstances, he has enormous difficulties to contend with; and I say nothing against him personally. Pope Pius IX and I will sing hymns together in heaven; and if humor does not die out, I will have some sport with him. I do not use the term Pope in an odious sense as applied to him; but I would that there were fewer Popes in the form of men whose prejudices are their only religion, and who have no toleration for their fellowmen that differ from them. I wish to make you understand that God never ordained you to have a conscience for others. Your conscience is for you, and for you alone.

In regard to other men you must judge charitably. I judge very charitably of many drunkards. I suppose that a drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God; but there are many drunkards of whom I could say that they are nearer to the kingdom of God than you are who never touch a drop of intoxicating liquor. There are very many stingy men of whom I could say that they are, after all, better men than you are who are spendthrifts. I see a great many men who have violent tempers. A violent temper is a bad thing to have; but a man who has a Mount Vesuvius in him, and

does not let it smoke often, is better than a man who has a snow-bank in him and praises himself because he does not get on fire! It is not your strength that keeps you from profanity; you do not wake up enough to swear. A man of a dull, phlegmatic nature, who laughs at a jest the day after it is uttered—do you suppose that man, although he never does anything in haste, and although he never speaks before he thinks, ought to pride himself on his caution?

And so in regard to the whole moral constitution of men. I do not wish you to understand that it is a matter of indifference. I would not have you understand that some men are not in a better position to know the truth than others. I would not have you understand that there is not an infinitely greater probability of the truth being reached by men who have right reason and emotion and conscience, than by those who have not. The point that I am pressing upon you is this: you must regard your brother charitably; and you must therefore perceive how he is made, and not judge him by the way in which you are made.

There is another matter, which perhaps would better be the subject of a whole discourse than the tail of this one, but which I will mention here—namely, the determining power of men's moral sense in regard to their theological beliefs. There can be nothing, I think, more sure than that all the great sects of Christendom cluster about certain organic mental peculiarities. Some men are fore-ordained to be Calvinists, and some men were created from all eternity to be Arminians. It lies in their nature.

Now, take a man of large benevolence. That is the predominating quality of his mind. It overshadows everything else. It produces summer all along down the sides of Mount Sinai. He sees no stone, nor rugged rock, but moss and flowers and leaves and vines. He clothes everything out of himself from his subjectivity. He invests all objects with his own personality. His strong sense of benevolence rules in his family, in his business; and, in his neighborhood, so far as he is concerned, it is the fundamental law. Now, you give him the Bible, and ask him whether he believes in a future eternal punishment, and what will he do? He will do just

what a magnet does when it is drawn through sand. The magnet will attract the iron and not the quartz that is in the sand. As he goes through the Bible everything that magnifies the goodness of God and the mercy of God will come after his magnet. Whenever he comes to a fissure where there is smoke of wrath he jumps it and will not touch it; when he comes to the wrath that burns to the lowest hell, he says, "Oriental metaphor," and goes on; and when he gets to Revelation, he says, "There is no such thing as eternal punishment."

A hard, dry man, who has not much benevolence, but who has a good deal of the sense of justice, of government, of rules and regulations, goes through the Bible, and when he returns he has on his back a pack filled with texts of fire.

The two men meet. One has not found anything of eternal punishment, and the other has found nothing but that. They stand over against each other, they are angry, and they dispute one with the other. One says, "You will go to hell because you don't believe in a hell;" and the other, in his mildness and provocativeness looks up, and says, "Well, if there isn't a hell, there ought to be one for *you*."

Now each man has followed the strong element of his constitution and nature; and taking a book so large as the Bible, which it took four thousand years to write, and which came from divers men reared under divers institutions, is it strange that persons of very different constitutional temperaments and biases, after going through it, should come back with different theories?

I do not say that the man who found nothing but goodness and mercy is right; nor do I say that the man who found only justice is right: I simply say that each followed his own bias. One leaned to the side of mercy, because that was the necessity of his being; and the other leaned to the side of justice, because that was the necessity of his being.

So you will find many a man who preaches, not Christ, but the philosophy of Christ. He never says, "Ecce Homo." He is never content to say, *Behold the lamb of God*, just as he is. He takes Christ to pieces. He declares that he is Prophet, Priest, and King; and he goes into a discussion to

show how he is Prophet, how he is Priest, and how he is King. He goes into a consideration of his work, and explains what it was, and how he carried it on. He gives an account of his passion and death; and he is not content to throw up the curtain, and let the august scene stand before the uninstructed and wondering hearts of men, and produce its own power by its adaptation thereto—oh, no. He analyzes Gethsemane. He puts Calvary in the crucible, and gives the reason for the suffering of the Saviour on the cross. He tells all about the arrangement and understanding between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And he is sure of all that he relates. He says to the sinner: "You must come to God through this enormous machinery of the atoning mercy of Christ." He does not tell his congregation that they can get near to Christ. They never have *Christ* preached to them. It is the *theology* of Christ, or the *philosophy* of Christ that he preaches to them.

Now, is there no difference between a thing and the philosophy of it? A mother has been gone from home two days, leaving her little babe, a year old, in the care of a friend; and, when she comes back, she rushes to the cradle and catches the babe and covers it with kisses, and says ten thousand sweet, sensible follies to it; and I sit down and say to her, "Now, what do you understand to be the nature of motherly love? What is there in that child that is so attractive to you?" I am theologizing to that mother.

How many men there are who are afraid that the church is going to Babylon! Why are they afraid? Because a race of young ministers are coming up who are preaching, not the philosophy of Christ, but the thing itself. They are addressing the soul, the conscience, the feelings of men. They are bringing the concrete God before men. They are presenting the absolute reality of the divine existence and love. But the fathers of the church have been accustomed to preach these things through the process of discussion—of analysis and synthesis; and when their methods are not followed, they are alarmed. It is a veritable alarm; and I do not know how they are going to be quieted, unless they will die. Then I think they will get over their fright.

Multitudes of men judge each other, and judge sects or churches, in matters of religious belief, by the peculiar way in which their intellect works with their conscience.

There is one other application that I will make, but that I ought not to make, because in doing it I will spoil a good sermon—for there is enough in it to make a good sermon. I refer to the corporate consciences of men. An old theologue says, "The church is the channel and medium of God's best gifts to mankind; and therefore it is more important that the church should be established than that this man or that man should live." That is the secret of persecution—the idea that, as the church is the medium of the best gifts of God to the world, the church must be spread, and that if a heretic stands in its way he is to be killed! On this theory, the world has been saturated with the blood of men who were as conscientious as you or I, and more so—men who subdued their natural feelings, overcame their affections, and gave up father and mother, brother and sister, children, every thing that was dear to them, that they might follow Christ.

I see the same thing now. You do not need to go back to the dark ages for illustrations of it. The venerable president of a theological seminary says, "I think the existence of this seminary is the existence of true theology in this State: now, any man who is not a friend to this seminary ought to be put down. The way to spread the kingdom of God evidently is to spread theology; this seminary teaches theology; and any thing that stands in the way of this seminary stands in the way of theology, and so of the kingdom of God or of Christ, and must be sacrificed." His conscience is firm and immovable on this point, and he feels justified, in the service of God, as he calls it, in doing whatever is necessary to maintain the seminary, even to the extent of making public confidential letters, and circulating injurious reports concerning men. "Ought we not," he says, "to love Christ more than father or mother, brothers or sisters, houses or lands? and I am doing it."

The same thing is true in regard to a commercial corporate conscience. It is said that corporations have no souls. No, they have not; for a corporation is nothing but a

machine in which men are the wheels. The individuals who are working in a corporation allow their consciences to act with the corporate conscience. The difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is not that in the Catholic Church there are Pope, cardinals and archbishops. We have orders of the priesthood as well as they. The difference between the Roman Church and the Protestant Church lies in the fact that the Roman Church requires a corporate conscience, saying to men, "Your conscience must go with the church;" and the Protestant Church says to men, "You must have an individual conscience—your conscience must be your own."

All through the ramifications of society you will see men who, while they have a private conscience at home and in their neighborhood, on the other hand, in regard to traffic and the community at large, have a corporate conscience. They have two consciences. As men have two horses, one for one road and one for another, or one for riding and driving and another for different work; so men have two consciences, one of them being a corporate conscience, for doing things which they would not think of doing with their private conscience; and the private conscience does not feel hurt or condemned by what the corporate conscience does. A man's private conscience holds him in restraint; but his corporate conscience gives loose to all manner of wrong-doing, creates inconsistencies between his public and his private life, brings him into discord with himself, and prevents that singleness of eye which Christ enjoined, and without which no man can be direct in whatever he does, throwing the energy of his entire self into it, whether it be public or private. Men who have this singleness and unity have moral power; but the men who divide themselves up, doing things in public relalations that they would scorn to do as private men, are morally enfeebled.

I beseech you, then, to remember the august words which I read to you in the opening service. You are not to domineer over other men's consciences. You are not to neglect yourself, but you are every day to remember that you will be judged by your consciences. Every one of us shall stand before God and be judged; and we shall be judged by the light

that we have, or that we might have had. We shall every one of us be judged, not by our neighbor's conscience, not by the conscience of this or that church, sect or party, but by the conscience which we carry in our own selves—our own personal sense of right and wrong.

Therefore, it is of the last degree of importance that you should set your conscience by the moral sense of God. Let men help you as much as they please; but remember that they are but rounds of the ladder. No man can afford to set his conscience less carefully than he does his watch.

Do I go to you to know what time it is? Do I stop the passer-by, and say, "Let me see the time of day?" No. I have pride in an accurate watch; and I go to Hammond, and say, "Have you taken a solar observation lately?" "Yes, to-day," he says. "Then set my watch." Nothing but the sun will do for me. I will go on absolute time.

You may help yourself by other men's beliefs and consciences; but there is only one true Timekeeper. Every man's conscience should be set every day with God's. It is Christ in you, your conscience in Christ Jesus, that should be your guide. By that you should attempt to live; by that you will be able peacefully to die; and by that you shall go to be forever with the Lord.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O THOU crowned One! we, too, are speaking unto thee, not in our own voice, but in the voice of our dear little children that have gone home. Our fathers and our mothers are with them. Our brothers and our sisters and the companions of our labor and toil through many years, who have been on earth with us in temptation and in struggle, but who have overcome, and are redeemed through death and immortality, are with thee this day, and we are not unknown in heaven, and our spirit is there with those who have gone before us; and as they rejoice with thee, and are filled with thy glory, it is as if we were with them. The communion of the saints brings us into the fellowship of those who are redeemed; and our hearts reach up gladly to-day, to feel that we have better brothers and better sisters than those that are incarnated; that we have nobler companions than the noblest who walk with us on earth; and that our hearts are to-day not altogether with us, but with those who are praising thee. We seem to identify ourselves with that throng, and to make their voice ours, and their sight our vision, and their praise ours; for we are too blind and too nearly dumb to praise thee, and are glad to think that those who are so much to us, and whom we will not let go, holding them fast in the arms of love, know how to praise with heavenly voice, and are filled with the glory of that estate toward which we aspire. We thank thee for the victory of those over whom we wept; of those whose going seemed like the opening of dungeon doors; of those whom we strove to keep. We are glad, now that the pang of grief is passed and that faith interprets providence, that they are at rest, and that they behold thy face, and that these mysteries which baffle us are plain to them, and that that glory which we seek after, they inherit, and that those praises which with the faintest voices we attune break forth in rapture and incessantly with them. Oh, blessed children of our love! oh, blessed companions, not separated from us, though gone forth from our sight and from our touch, yet ever with us!—in that which is divine in us, in all that part of our nature which is of God, we still hold them. We are still companions with them. We rejoice that time is bringing us nearer to that blessed estate, to that glorious company, to that fellowship above; and we beseech thee while times do scowl and storms are filling the heavens, that we may minister to ourselves these thoughts, though not to make us impatient of the burden or of the storm. May we be willing to bear so long as Christ Jesus wishes us to bear, and as soldiers to stand and defend whatever is appointed—and that, till we are recalled; yet may we comfort ourselves in the darkness by the thought of the life beyond; and as the thorns depress, may we comfort ourselves with the thought of that thornless Brow that once wore thorn-crowns for us.

Now from thine eyes the light is that of love. Now thy brow is full of beauty and of glory, and death shall not disfigure thee, nor shall weakness reach up to despoil thee of thy strength, which thou art holding for all thine own. We are, O Lord Jesus, thine, not be-

cause of what we are, nor because of what we have done, nor for any reason that we can give, except that thou art God; and it is the nature of God to love and to nourish imperfection, to forgive iniquity and transgression and sin, to take all who will be taken, and to bear them steadily forward toward his own estate of glory. Therefore, we are thine because we need thee; because we are so sinful; because we are so undeserving; because we are so far from a completed fidelity; and because without thee we should die. With all our manifold weaknesses, and with a consciousness of transgressions infinite, we bring ourselves before thee, not bowing down like slaves, nor cowering. We do not fear thee. We come boldly to thee. Thy presence is the sanctuary of love. We have been forgiven so many times, the twilight has flashed over our soul so often, and the way of thy soul with ours is so plain, that we cannot fear thee any longer, thou crowned Love!

We rejoice in thee. We rejoice in thee all the more because over against our unworthiness rise up so conspicuous, and to us so awful, the beauty, the grandeur, and the majesty of thy greatness and thine all-forgiving compassion. Oh, that thou mightest be to others what thou art to us! Oh, that those who go with dishevelled locks and poor raiment, wandering beggars by the palace of their King, might know what raiment, what food, and what a royal reception there is for them, if they would. Why should the children of a king go thus defiled and full of distress? Reveal thyself to thy weak ones; to those whose faith is limited by mis-teaching; to those who have never dared to let their souls out in trust towards an all-trustworthy Lord Jesus; to those who are conscious of their sins. To those whose consciences are bulwarks between themselves and thee, make thine appearing. Rise as the sun from the mountains, and drive away their darkness, and let them behold how sinful they are, that they may come the more readily to thee and be forgiven, and be received and brought into thy realm. Those who stand away, seeking their own pleasure, and casting behind them even with defiling touch the things which are sacred—we beseech thee that thou wilt give to them a better mind. Fill them with a sense of compunction for that which is past; but with the radiancy of hope may they look toward the things which are before them; and more and more earnestly may they take hold of the things that remain.

We pray that thou wilt infuse into the hearts of all a desire to live better; to cleanse their motives; to have their hearts searched and purified by the Spirit of God. Grant that, in the discharge of our earthly duties, we may all seek more to embellish the things which are homely, and to lift up with dignified performance the things that are in themselves poor and mean. Bring that which is noble in our own souls to cover that which hath not nobility in itself. We pray that we may walk among men with such cheerfulness, with such sweetness of disposition, with such hopefulness and with such courage, that we shall diffuse the balm thereof on every side, and that men shall know that God has been with us, and has taught us his own secret. Grant us forgiveness for our selfishness, and pride, and coldness, and indifference toward one another.

Grant that we may seek in all the days that remain, wherever we are, toward all—toward the good because they are good, and toward the evil because they are evil, and need it—to be more like our Saviour, and to do to them as he is doing to us.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all the labors of thy servants here; upon all our schools; upon all the means employed for carrying on the various works of love with which thou hast inspired those who are among us. We pray that thou wilt bless all those who are teaching, and all those who are taught. Open the hearts of our people to be more bountiful; to spare themselves less and less; to spend and be spent for the cause of man.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all who are with us to-day. Though some may be strangers in outward guise, may there be that inward knowledge of God, that sense of God present with us, which shall join us all together in holy fellowship. May this be a home to many a heart that for the first time has come hither.

We pray that thou wilt bless those who are separated from their kindred—all wanderers; those who are absent temporarily, and are strangers in a strange land. Fulfill their desires. Bless those who have left dear ones behind them. Preserve those who wander everywhere. Rememember our dear brethren on the sea, in foreign lands, in the wilderness, wherever they may be; and keep them, we beseech thee, even as our hearts would have them kept.

We pray that thou wilt grant that thy grace which hath been so much to us may go forth through all our land. Oh, let not thy house be a house of disputation! Grant that thy temple may not be filled with such passions as belong to animals. Drive forth from the temple those that sell and buy, and all things that pollute and defile; and may the truth of God shine out from all churches. May the truth of God unite all people. May the truth of God inspire knowledge and the desire thereof, and all probity, and all fidelity, and all obedience, and all subordination. May all men honor each other, and those who are set over them in the Lord. We beseech thee, not only that thou wilt unite the hearts of citizens everywhere, but that thou wilt draw together the nations of the earth. May those defiling passions which have so long estranged them die for want of fuel. Grant, we pray thee, that there may be less and less of separation through selfishness, and that there may be more and more of the unity of a true brotherhood. Oh, that the name of Christ might no longer divide, but bring together! And may the Christian nations of the globe set the example to all wandering tribes and heathen nations, not only of outward prosperity and worldly comfort, but of nobility, and generosity, and justice, and purity, and truth. And so may the cause of this world become the cause of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and may he reign from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT, we beseech thee, thy blessing to rest, our Father, upon the truth which has been spoken in accordance with thy will. Overrule whatever has been imperfect and sinful. Bless according to the bounty that is in thy heart, and not according to the fitness of that which we present, all that has been done, and felt, and thought, and said. And now, let thy blessing go home with us. The peace of God which passeth all understanding—in that may we dwell.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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